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Women Welfare Workers in South Carolina Textile Mills, 1890-1935

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Women Welfare Workers in South Carolina
Textile Mills, 1890-1935

by

Elizabeth Pearce Bilderback

Bachelor of Arts
Salem College, 1984

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of History
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Introduction

During the height of southern textile prosperity in the late 1910s and early 1920s, many cotton mill owners hired women to oversee welfare programs in their mill villages. Little is known, however, about these welfare workers. The questions of who these women were and where they came from; how the welfare workers and mill workers responded to each other; and why welfare workers either withdrew or were withdrawn during the 1930s and 1940s remain unanswered. The published histories of textile companies rarely mention the welfare worker. And histories of welfare work in the United States either do not consider such work pertinent or are unaware that it occurred.

A glimpse of what these welfare women did and who they were can be pieced together from scattered sources. Determining the reactions of welfare workers, responses to the programs by mill workers, and the actual success or failure of welfare programs and workers is even more difficult because of the paucity of records. If the women who worked in the South Carolina mill villages as welfare workers left diaries or papers, they remain hidden. So the search for these women has led to early mill and local newspapers, contemporary theses and dissertations, church records and publications, contemporary and modern books and

journal articles, and the 1930s Federal Writers' Project oral life histories.

Books and articles from the early 1900s to 1930s have a general problem: they are biased. The authors portrayed mill men either as compassionate paternal figures or as hard-hearted businessmen. Yet despite an author's partiality, the reader can glean what mill life was like in the early 1900s. One of the publications often quoted by researchers is Marjorie Potwin's book Cotton Mill People of the Piedmont, A Study in Social Change. Potwin, a welfare worker in Spartanburg, South Carolina, wrote a glowing account of Spartan Mills' welfare program. It is rumored, however, that she had more than a working relationship with the mill president. August Kohn, a journalist and mill investor, also wrote a series of pro-mill articles in 1907 which appeared in a Charleston newspaper, The News and Courier. The Commissioner of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry compiled these articles into a book, The Cotton Mills of South Carolina. Continuing the pro-mill inclination, the Southern Textile Bulletin, in its 1918 "Health and Happiness" issue, stated that its purpose was to "counteract the organized campaign of misrepresentation that has caused the mills of the South to unjustly come into disrepute."¹ Many mill men hoped that

¹Marjorie A. Potwin, Cotton Mill People of the Piedmont, A Study in Social Change (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927); August Kohn, The Cotton Mills of South Carolina (Columbia: S.C. Department of Agriculture, Commerce and Immigration, 1907); and Southern Textile Bulletin, Health and Happiness Number (Charlotte, N.C.), 19

publications such as these would help to quiet the cries of the reformers.

In 1929, Harriett L. Herring finished Welfare Work in Mill Villages. This work grew out of a project she undertook for the Institute for Research in Social Science at Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Herring was a native North Carolinian with graduate education, and she worked as personnel officer at Carolina Woolen and Cotton Mills in Spray, North Carolina. She joined the Institute in 1925 to research southern industrialization. Her initial project was to study "social and economic aspects of the southern textile industry." When she approached the North Carolina Cotton Manufacturers Association about the project, she was rebuffed. So the Institute redirected her study to focus on welfare work. Even though her research consisted mainly of interviews with mill owners and not with the workers, she presented a fairly balanced depiction of mill welfare programs but could not speak to their effect on the mill worker.²

Revisionist authors, however, wanted to expose problems in the mill villages and to present a less idealistic view. Lois McDonald, a South Carolinian and one-time mill worker

December 1918, 310.

²Harriet L. Herring, Welfare Work in Mill Villages: The Story of Extra-Mill Activities in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1929); and Allen Tullos, Habits of Industry: White Culture and the Transformation of the Carolina Piedmont (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 293-294.

who later devoted her life to the cause of workers' rights, wrote Southern Mill Hills: A Study of Social and Economic Forces in Certain Textile Mill Villages in response to Potwin's book. McDonald brought out the good and the bad in mill villages, mill welfare programs, and mill owners' responses to both. Likewise, Liston Pope wrote Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia in order to show the subtle control exerted over the mill worker by the management. He portrayed mill management as highly manipulative, even using village ministers to coerce workers into accepting all mill policies.³ These works and others provide a balance for the heavily pro-mill publications.

Historians researching and publishing during the 1980s offer a more moderate view than any of the earlier works. David Carlton, Allen Tullos, and Jacquelyn Hall and others provide a more comprehensive portrait of mill life. I. A. Newby does not focus exclusively on mill workers, but his treatment of them is insightful.⁴ Tullos and Hall,

³Lois McDonald, Southern Mill Hills: A Study of Social and Economic Forces in Certain Textile Mill Villages (New York: Alex L. Hillman, 1928); and Liston Pope, Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia (New York: Yale University Press, 1942).

⁴David L. Carlton, Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Tullos, Habits of Industry; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al., Like A Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); I. A. Newby, Plain Folk in the New South: Social Change and Cultural Persistence, 1880-1915 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); and Tom E. Terrill and Jerrold Hirsch, eds., Such As Us: Southern Voices of the Thirties (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

especially, used oral histories to fill the void of the mill worker's perspective. Unfortunately, most of these authors looked broadly at the welfare program and not the welfare worker in any great detail.

During the 1880s, the United States experienced a period of growth and prosperity. The burgeoning of the textile industry in the South was a direct product of this dynamic. For the first time since the Civil War, merchants, professionals, and some landed gentry had money to invest, and they looked within the borders of their own states for investment opportunities. Cotton mills were a logical choice because the machinery and technology were readily available from northern suppliers, and sources of water power, raw cotton, and white labor, though lacking experience, were plentiful and cheap. These southern industrialists also believed that building a mill would increase business for the local merchants and improve the lifestyles of the townspeople. Thus, cotton mills began springing up all over the southern Piedmont.

As the number of mills increased, so did the attention paid to them. Southern mills differed from northern textile mills in two distinct ways: worker housing and the background of the labor force. Northern mill men built near cities with large labor pools which enabled workers to commute to work. In contrast, the South had very few cities of any size, so the majority of mill workers were imported from agricultural areas and the mountains. Additionally,

the southern mill owners, unlike their northern counterparts, usually hired entire families rather than individual workers because it was a more effective way of bringing labor into the mills and provided a more stable workforce. This type of recruitment obligated the mill to provide family-style housing for its workers, so most southern textile mills built a corresponding mill village.

Southern mill men soon recognized that it was advantageous to have their workers living near the mill where they could exert some measure of control over their activities. Not only did southern mill workers have to adjust to working regulated hours, but they also had to adjust to living in close proximity to other people. By housing the entire workforce in a mill village, mill managers could observe quite easily how well a worker adjusted. There were few if any similar mill towns in the North. The closest example was Lowell Mills where young women were sought out as workers and provided with living accommodations and daily supervision. On the whole, though, the southern mill village was a new phenomenon.⁵

A pioneer in the idea of the mill village was the Graniteville Manufacturing Company in Graniteville, South Carolina. Begun in 1845, it was one of the first mills to

⁵For further information on this period and the growth of the Southern textile industry, see Gavin Wright, Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1986); Carlton, Mill and Town; Tullos, Habits of Industry; and Hall et al., Like A Family.

establish a village for its workers. Mill owner William Gregg worked to make his village an inviting place to live by constructing charming Gothic cottages for his workers. So influential were Gregg's ideas of mill village design that Graniteville served as the prototype during the cotton mill boom of the late 1800s. Most of the mill villages built during the 1880s and 1890s, however, were constructed quickly and without much finishing and did not begin to live up to Graniteville's standard. There often was too little thought given to the needs of the operatives, except on the most basic level. These mills built only what was absolutely necessary in order to begin operating, namely the mill and housing.

As mills became more stable in their operations, more attention was paid to the operatives' other needs. However, providing the community's needs beyond those connected with work and housing, such as education, religion, and recreation, was considered welfare work. Again William Gregg's Graniteville served as an early example for the use of welfare work in a mill village. Like Graniteville, other mills began providing schools, churches, and recreational activities and facilities. However, this change frequently required prodding by outside forces, even though many mill men realized that such facilities were not a waste of company money.

Because of the problems associated with southern mill villages, they attracted the attention of various groups on

the national and regional levels. As the 20th century dawned, the Progressive movement took hold of the country. Social reform became the rallying cry, and southern textile mill villages were fertile ground for reformers. Reformers considered the mill villages of the early 1900s as nothing better than slums. Several factors contributed to this perception: inadequate health care, child labor, poor housing construction, little money available to improve the buildings, and little or no landscape to hold the soil and entice the eye. Also, livestock brought from the farm and kept in the yards, and poor sanitation services furthered the image of slum housing. As unsightly mill villages became more prevalent, townspeople became concerned for their own health and raised the cry of reform.

Ministers and women of the mainstream Protestant denominations joined with reformers and called for relief for poor working mothers and for the salvation of the children from the horrors of the mill. The main focus was upon saving the children from toiling in the mill and providing a better environment in which they might grow. Reformers also focused on cleaning up the villages and trying to improve what they considered eye-sores on the mill hills. In order to placate the loud and repeated calls for reform and to keep the reformers and the state out of their business, mill men assumed the responsibility of providing assorted welfare measures for their workers. Mills varied widely in the scope of their welfare work programs. Some

programs were quite elaborate, but most only provided schools and churches. Despite the reformers' cries, it was often profitability that dictated the type and extent of welfare work.

The mill hired men and women to carry out the welfare work program. The majority of these workers were women. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, women were the natural choice because working with domestic problems was considered to be women's work. Not only would it be difficult and suspicious for a man to go into a home when the husband was not there, but also women could relate to the problems encountered in the home. This was also the time of the Social Gospel when church-going women campaigned for social reforms. So it was women, more so than men, who were hired by the mill or employed by the church as welfare workers in the southern mill villages.

Women welfare workers came to the mill village through three different means. Women concerned about social reform and social workers were hired directly by the mill. Women who desired moral uplift as well as physical and mental uplift came through the church. And some women came through outside organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association and the state Home Extension Program. While the only difference between the three types of welfare workers was the role of religion in their welfare work, how they came to the mills is important. Women welfare workers were not just reformers or missionaries, but a mixture of each

working together in the mill villages to help the people in their transition to factory life. In order to gain an understanding of these women welfare workers, one must begin by understanding the history of the South Carolina mill village.

Chapter 1

The Early Years

South Carolina was a leader in the growth and development of the southern textile industry in the 1890s and early 1900s. In 1880, South Carolina had only 18 cotton mills, but by 1908 there were 150 mills with almost half being built between 1895 and 1903. Accompanying this mill boom was a corresponding expansion of existing mill facilities. During the 1890s, the number of spindles in South Carolina grew by 330 per cent from 415,158 to 1,285,328 and doubled again by 1905. By 1907 there were more than 3 million spindles in operation. This expansion of production capabilities resulted in a sharp rise in the textile industry's workforce. The number of mill workers increased 278 per cent between 1890 and 1900, so that by 1905 there were more than 37,000 people employed in South Carolina's cotton mills.⁶

Unlike their northern counterparts, most southern cotton mills did not have locally available labor pools from which to draw their operatives. Because the South was

⁶Thomas F. Parker, "The South Carolina Cotton Mills - A Manufacturer's View," reprint from South Atlantic Quarterly, October 1909, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, Greenville County Public Library (GCPL) [this scrapbook contains newspaper clippings and ephemera collected by Parker's mother from about 1900 to 1910]; Carlton, Mill and Town, 133-134; and Kohn, Cotton Mills, 20, 91.

largely agricultural, there were few urban centers in those states in the late nineteenth century. As late as 1919, South Carolina had only thirteen cities of 10,000 or more people. With most South Carolinians living in small towns, on farms, or in the mountain regions, mill recruiters had to scour the countryside and mountains for laborers.⁷

Mills sought out entire native-born white families rather than individual white males or females and encouraged these families to leave their rural lives behind and move to the mill. When William Gregg opened his mill at Graniteville, he wanted single white females to work and board at the mill. The response was minimal from this group, but families quickly accepted the work and the cottages that Gregg provided. Mill men of the 1880s learned from Gregg's early venture and did not waste their efforts on recruiting individual workers. Families were preferred also over individuals for their stability and also because one family provided several potential workers. The combination of the rural family work ethic, where even the youngest member was expected to make a contribution to the livelihood of the family, with mills' willingness to hire workers as young as five years of age, made the hiring of families the most efficient way to fill the industry's labor needs. To attract these families, however, mill owners had

⁷Potwin, Cotton Mill People, 30-31; Parker, "The South Carolina Cotton Mills," 4; and Kohn, Cotton Mills, 23.

to provide housing, which they did in the form of mill villages.⁸

By 1908 South Carolina's mill villages had a population of 150,000 people, which represented about one-fifth of the white population of the state. The population movement caused by the mill boom changed the state's demographics as well as workers' lives. According to historian David Carlton, mill workers came from three segments of the rural white population: small farmers who had fallen on hard times, "sandhillers" or "poor white trash," and mountaineers. All groups shared some characteristics, namely a strong sense of independence, agrarian work habits, and a lifestyle at or below the subsistence level. While the farmers generally were thought of as hard-working and honest, the "sandhillers" and mountaineers were seen as lazy, apathetic, transient, and especially in the case of the mountaineers, as unruly and barbaric.⁹ This image probably developed from their self-sufficient lifestyle, which did not produce much disposable income. However, because some workers exhibited less than desirable

⁸Cathy Louise McHugh, "The Family Labor System in the Southern Cotton Textile Industry, 1880-1915" (Ph.D diss., Stanford University, 1981), 109; and Broadus Mitchell and George Sinclair Mitchell, The Industrial Revolution in the South (1930; reprint, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 256; and Lacy K. Ford, Jr., Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 272-273.

⁹Carlton, Mill and Town, 146-148; Parker, "The South Carolina Cotton Mills," 5; and Hall et al., Like A Family, 3, 9-10.

qualities, mill people as a whole were seen as a group in need of "civilizing."

Mill people, whether from the farm or the mountain, found themselves facing a new way of life, living in close proximity to each other and often very far from kin-folk. They worked hours set by the mill, not by the season or the crop. As Jacquelyn Hall and others discovered, most mill families coped with the change by maintaining familiar ways which sustained "an older rural culture." They kept livestock for home consumption in the yard. They also continued to use rural health and sanitation methods which urban people found distasteful and potentially dangerous to the public health. In other words, mill workers sustained "undisciplined" rural habits in an increasingly industrial setting.¹⁰ Contributing to the problem was the mill, which built houses as cheaply as possible and provided few urban sanitation and landscaping services.

By 1906 the mill villages, with their concentrated population and poor living conditions, came to be seen as a social problem that could no longer be ignored by the rest of society. Marie Van Vorst, a northern writer and reformer, came to Columbia to experience first-hand the conditions in southern textile mills. She worked in two different mills in Columbia and boarded in their respective

¹⁰Hall et al., Like A Family, 13; and Jennings J. Rhyne, Some Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Their Villages (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), 27.

villages. In each case, Van Vorst found the mills to be filthy, refuse in the streets, human and other waste thrown out of the back door, living conditions cramped and barely adequate but the mill worker too tired to try to change things. Van Vorst summed up the mill village in this way:

. . .[it] is a section to be shunned like the plague. Plague is not too strong a word to apply to the pest-ridden, epidemic-filled, filthy settlement where on this part of the county the mill-hand lives, moves and has his being, horrible honeycomb of lives, shocking morals and decency. . .There is not a garden within miles, not a flower, scarcely a tree.¹¹

Other people described typical mill villages in similar ways. Most villages had one or two water pumps to a street, no electricity, out-houses, unpaved streets, unfenced yards, and crowded housing. There were a few mills which provided water, electricity, and sewage, but these were exceptions.¹²

The state's middle- and upper-classes regarded the mill village as a problem which threatened all of society, and town people saw the mill as an incubator in which the undesirable elements of society thrived. Town people feared contagion from mill people because disease was more common and widespread in villages that lacked sanitation and were

¹¹Mrs. John Van Vorst and Marie Van Vorst, The Woman Who Toils: Being the Experiences of Two Ladies as Factory Girls (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1903), 217, 279. Miss Van Vorst chose Columbia because she was friends with a woman whose husband was part-owner of one of the mills there.

¹²Hall et al., Like A Family, 119-120; J. F. Ligon, "The Relation of the Church to the Cotton Mill Village" (Thesis, University of South Carolina, [1914]), 20; and Newby, Plain Folk, 246.

*overcrowded. Thus, citizens called for action to improve the mill situation.*¹³ An article in 1908 in The State, one of the main daily newspapers in South Carolina, discussed the mill problem and called for citizens to find solutions because mill people

constitute an element in the population so considerable that their influence for good or bad must be felt throughout the body politic, social, and moral, and whatever conduces to the good of these employees and their families must command the interest and support of all patriotic citizens of the State. Anything that tends to improve their surroundings, to uplift their lives, to aid them in their progress upward, is so much for the advantage of South Carolina.¹⁴

Social reformers heard the citizens' concerns and took up the cause of mill welfare.

Calls for social reform were not new to this period. Society always has had problems and people to point them out. The difference was the perspective of the reformers and social welfare in general. During the 1870s and 1880s, social welfare placed the individual, rather than society or the economy, as the sole source of social ills. Even the scant social legislation put the burden of improvement on the individual and not on society. Relying on private initiative and funding, reformers tried to help individuals out of poverty and despair. Volunteer visitors received limited training from the Charity Organization Society to visit the needy. The Society was a private assistance

¹³Carlton, Mill and Town, 132-133, 156; and Potwin, Cotton Mill People, 32.

¹⁴Potwin, Cotton Mill People, 31; and The State (Columbia, S.C.), 19 April 1908, 4, col. 1-2.

association with chapters in several large northern cities. Most of its work was done through visitation, which allowed the volunteer to determine if the individual was worthy of assistance. Reformers also hoped that the visitor, usually a well-to-do member of society, would be an example to the poor and inspire them to become better citizens.¹⁵

Another type of social work which began in the late 1880s was settlement houses. Settlement workers realized that the problem for displaced people was making the change from a rural to an urban environment. Jane Addams is perhaps best known for her work with settlements. She opened Hull-House in 1889. Its mission was

To provide a center for a higher civic and social life; to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises, and to investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago.¹⁶

Located in an immigrant neighborhood of Chicago, Hull-House offered a combination of classes and clubs to the residents of the area. Settlement workers also went into the neighborhood to teach child care and health care. Addams and her workers saw social work differently from the Charity Organization Society workers. They lived and worked among

¹⁵June Axinn and Herman Levin, Social Welfare: A History of the American Response to Need (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers), 99-102; and Harriett M. Bartlett, "Early Trends," in Neil Gilbert and Harry Specht, The Emergence of Social Welfare and Social Work (Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1976), 287-288.

¹⁶Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull-House with Autobiographical Notes (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945), 112.

the needy, provided opportunities for self-improvement, and they advocated social legislation directed at changing society.¹⁷ Addams' settlement work was the model that the Methodist Church used for Wesley Houses in their home mission work a decade later.

By 1900, social welfare moved from emphasizing individual reform to pursuing means that would improve society. The economic slump of 1893-96 suggested to reformers that the individual was not the problem. Society had to change, and the state needed to be involved. The call in 1908 for the citizens of South Carolina to help the mill people was an example of this new philosophy. Social workers became advocates for social legislation, and it was almost exclusively women who joined the ranks of social workers. Not until after World War II did men enter the profession in large numbers. Thus women social workers led the way in the social reform movement.¹⁸

Women took up the cause of child welfare in the mill villages as part of the early reform movement. A non-denominational group known as the King's Daughters established a school and a girls' society at a mill in Columbia in the early 1890s. This same group later worked with other women to create the Free Kindergarten Association

¹⁷Bartlett, "Early Trends," 287-288; Addams, Twenty Years, 101-105, 109; and Axinn and Levin, Social Welfare, 112-113.

¹⁸Axinn and Levin, Social Welfare, 133-134, 137; and Gilbert and Specht, The Emergence of Social Welfare, 286.

in 1895. Although the Association worked to provide free access to kindergartens for any needy white child, it focused primarily on mill children. The Association's first work was a summer kindergarten in Columbia. From this beginning, the Association developed a network of kindergartens at Olympia, Granby, and Richland mills in the city.¹⁹

The Free Kindergarten Association had the support of Lewis Parker, the owner of these mills. Without his support, the Association's work would have proved unsuccessful. By 1907 all of the Parker mills and some others in the upstate supported "flourishing free kindergartens." Eventually, the Association turned the kindergarten work over to mill management. Most of the kindergartens continued to operate and expand under the mill's direction, as in the case of the Olympia kindergarten which was still in operation in 1918 with three female teachers.²⁰

D. B. Johnson, president of Winthrop College in Rock Hill, was so impressed with the beneficial use of kindergartens in mill villages that he created a

¹⁹Carlton, Mill and Town, 168-170; Rosalind Rosenberg, Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 33-36; and The State, 15 December 1907, 7, col. 1-2.

²⁰Ralph Carsbol Barbare, "Community Welfare Work in the Mill Villages of Greenville, South Carolina" (Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1930), 90; The State, 15 December 1907, 7, col. 1-2; and *ibid.*, 9 June 1918, 3, col. 4.

kindergarten department as part of the normal school curricula in 1899. A room was furnished with kindergarten equipment and "three advanced pupils of the school have taken up Kindergarten as a special work, with the expectation of preparing themselves as Kindergartners."²¹ Johnson understood the importance of kindergartens in childhood development and the necessity of training young women for work in kindergartens. His vision made Winthrop College the leader in the field of Kindergarten Education.

Miss Minnie MacFeat, one of the founders of the Free Kindergarten Association, was principal of the Kindergarten Department at Winthrop for many years. Miss Charlotte S. Porcher of Oakley Depot, South Carolina, who graduated from Winthrop College with a degree in Kindergarten in 1903, went on to work at Monaghan Mills in Greenville, South Carolina. During the State Summer School for Teachers held at Winthrop in 1903, Miss MacFeat set up a model kindergarten where children from Arcade Cotton Mills were brought in each day. The Superintendent of Education praised the work in his annual report:

It gave the children, many of whom had mothers at work in the mills, advantage of the training, and it gave the students the opportunity of studying these children, who are today offering to the South some of its most serious problems.²²

²¹The State, 15 December 1907, 7, col. 1-2; and Reports and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina (Columbia: Gonzales and Bryan, State Printers, var. dates), 1900, vol. 2, 238.

²²Reports and Resolutions, 1904, vol. 1, 478.

Miss Belle Simrill of Chester, South Carolina, attended the session, and she later became active as a missionary welfare worker through the Methodist Church.²³

Welfare for mill children was undertaken by women not only because it fell into their sphere, but also because children were seen as the future of society. Reformers recognized that children could be molded into "proper" citizens and that children exerted influence over the rest of the mill family. Children composed a significant proportion of the mill population, and without legal age restrictions on employment, even the youngest child could work in the mill. Widows with large families saw mill work as a way out of poverty as well as a means of securing housing, which the mill allocated by the number of workers in a family. Thus, children were important to the mill family as a means of income as well as a way of getting larger housing accommodations. Furthermore, because child labor was relatively inexpensive, the mill welcomed children as a means of cutting operational expenses.²⁴

The economic benefits of child labor explain the reluctance of mill men and mill workers to remove children from the mills. Historian Broadus Mitchell wrote in 1921:

The great morality then was to go to work. The use of children was not avarice then, but

²³Ibid., 464, 665.

²⁴Carlton, Mill and Town, 170, 181; and McHugh, "The Family Labor System," 97.

philanthropy; not exploitation, but generosity and cooperation and social mindedness.²⁵

Whether mill men hired children out of beneficence is debatable, but they strongly resisted losing this source of labor which would be expensive to replace. Parents, who often depended on the meager pay the children brought home, also favored child labor in the mills. Even though schools were available to mill children, parents did not see education as a way to a better life. Therefore, during these early years, there was resentment on the part of mill owners and some mill workers toward the reformers who seemed to be interfering with their lives.

With the mill population rapidly increasing and mill life not improving noticeably, the women reformers realized that their limited efforts were not sufficient. They turned to others for assistance to help mill people "to shed the stigma of the mill and be assimilated into a united white society." Through the efforts of the King's Daughters, the state enacted a labor law in 1903 which restricted the hiring of children under 10 years of age. This law also provided that in 1904 the age limit would be raised to eleven and then to twelve in 1905. The child labor law affected about three children out of every 100 operatives. However, no enforcement measure was included, and children under the age limit continued to work by obtaining a special permit allowed by the law or by "helping" a sibling or

²⁵Quoted in McDonald, Southern Mill Hills, 20.

parent. Parents needed their children in the mill to increase the family's income, and because young children traditionally worked on the farm, there was no second thought about their working in the mill.²⁶

Despite the passage of the Child Labor Act of 1903, state legislation that addressed conditions in the mill and mill village was sparse. Reformers kept up the pressure, however, and the General Assembly eventually set up a system of factory inspection under the state Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry in 1909. Commissioner Ebbie Watson found 1,314 fewer children under 16 years of age at work in the mills at the end of his first year. The decline was slow because in 1910 there were still over 7,000 children under 16 years of age employed in the mills due to loopholes in the law. Watson apparently chose to include children under 16 years of age to illustrate the need to raise the employment age limit. It was not until 1916, however, that the state raised the employment limit to 14 years of age, in a compromise between raising it to 16 years of age and maintaining the 1903 limit of 10 years of age.²⁷

²⁶The stigma referred to is the image of the mill person as sallow, listless, dirty, ignorant, and in general unworthy of inclusion in the white middle class world. Carlton, Mill and Town, 170, 181; McHugh, "The Family Labor System," 97; James C. Cobb, Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984 (Louisville: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 29; David Duncan Wallace, South Carolina, A Short History, 1520-1948 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951), 689; and Kohn, The Cotton Mills, 111.

²⁷Ebbie J. Watson, The Textile Industry in South Carolina in the Mid-Year of 1910 (Columbia: S.C. Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industries, 1910), 5, 8; Carlton, Mill and Town, 188-189; and Wallace, South

Because reform legislation often conflicted with the interests of the state's industrialists, legislation was minimal at best. Therefore the responsibility of welfare work in the mill village fell largely on the shoulders of sympathetic mill owners or outside organizations, which in many cases, bore the burden together.

Chapter 2

Mill Sponsored Welfare Work

When cotton mills were new ventures in the 1890s, profits, if any, invariably were paid to stockholders as dividends or were reinvested in the plant and equipment. As profitability increased, and mills became economically stable, the mill owner and the stockholders began investing in their labor force by financing welfare work. Within a given mill village, expenditures for welfare work depended both on the mill's profit margin and on its management recognizing the economic benefit in such work. Mill owners' concerns lay first with their company and its prosperity, which largely rested with the competence and stability of the workforce, as owners gradually recognized; consequently, welfare programs in general were not purely paternalistic ventures. Mill owners recognized that unfit and unhappy operatives were inefficient and cost the mill owners money, so it was to the their advantage to support welfare work.

In the early 1900s, reformers realized that industrialists were resistant to attempts by government to regulate industrial work, so they turned their attention to the mill owners to direct the social change being sought. By trying to impress upon mill authorities that welfare work was good business practice, reformers emphasized the new

philosophy that in industry, education was the key to progress. An educated operative was more able to learn new skills and put to use those skills in the mill. Such workers were more likely to try to improve themselves than uneducated ones. However, the idea of welfare work slowly took hold among mill men.²⁸

By the 1920s, most mill owners saw welfare work as a means of improving the type of laborer they employed and as a method of increasing operative efficiency. As Mildred Andrews said in her book, The Men and the Mills, "Mills invest money in building better communities. People who live in better communities make better citizens. Better citizens make better business." Welfare programs provided the operative the opportunity to improve his or her surroundings through domestic science classes, gardening clubs, health demonstrations, and other activities. Mill men hoped that operatives would take an interest in their house and their work in the mill and not be easily swayed to move to another mill or back to the farm. Owners also thought that welfare programs would inspire a sense of loyalty in the operative to the mill owner. Eventually

²⁸Albert N. Sanders, "Greenville and the Southern Tradition," in The Arts in Greenville, edited by Alfred S. Reid (Greenville, S.C.: Furman University, 1960), 140; for further information on welfare work in industry see Stuart D. Brandes, American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

welfare work came to be just another part of doing business, and owners hired welfare workers to direct their programs.²⁹

The mill owners' shift in attitude was assisted by the growth of the southern textile industry in the 1910s and early 1920s. The number of mills increased, and by 1923 almost half of all active spindles in the United States were located in the South. However, decades of industrial growth depleted the countryside and the mountains of available labor. Also advances in machine technology created a need for a larger labor force and demanded that workers be more skilled and able to concentrate for longer periods. The rise in skill level caused a decrease in the use of young children and a corresponding increase in the employment of older workers. The combined effect of these forces was a labor shortage. In order to maintain their labor force and to ensure competent operatives, mill authorities began to use welfare programs. They realized that "it pays in dollars and cents to have alert, intelligent, healthy operatives who are happy in their homes and get as nearly as possible maximum production from the machines they tend."³⁰

²⁹Most of the welfare programs focused on the mill women and children in their attempt to improve the homelife of the mill people; some mills did hire male welfare workers to provide athletics programs and other activities which would relate directly to male operatives. Mildred G. Andrews, The Men and the Mills: A History of the Southern Textile Industry (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987), 194, 196; Carlton, Mill and Town, 89-90; and Southern Textile Bulletin, 14.

³⁰James A. Hodges, New Deal Labor Policy (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 12; Mitchell and Mitchell, The Industrial Revolution, 258-259; Hall et al., Like A Family, 5; McHugh, "The Family Labor System," 23-25,

Operatives who were fit and attentive would have fewer accidents on the job. And if mill sponsored welfare programs had the additional benefit of luring operatives away from other mills, it was all the better for the mill.

In order to implement their welfare programs, mill men turned mainly to women. Those women hired directly by the mill were either social workers, teachers, or nurses. The reason women entered these fields goes back to the role of women in society as nurturers and keepers of society's moral values; there were also very few career options for women at this time, and they could be paid at a lower wage than men. Thomas Parker realized that mill welfare work was in a woman's sphere. His policy was that

A woman's welfare worker should live in the village and visit and be always ready to receive visits. She should assist the girls and women organize their committees and clubs, get the best available speakers to address them, promote their games and socials, teach them to care for reading, teach them in classes to cook and sew,³¹ and help in other ways too numerous to mention.³¹

The workers lived in the village, so they could spend all of their time working with the people. They provided domestic science classes, adult night school classes, club activities, socials, athletics, reading rooms, gardening classes, lawn beautification contests, and other activities.

79; and Herbert J. Lahne, The Cotton Mill Worker, Labor in Twentieth Century America Series (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1944), 124.

³¹Thomas F. Parker, "The Cotton Mills of South Carolina: Part I, Industrial Development," Greenville News (Greenville, S.C.), 3 May 1908, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL.

Monaghan Mills in Greenville was a model of welfare work. Thomas F. Parker, who built the mill, was born in Charleston, worked for a few years in Philadelphia, then moved to Greenville in 1899 and opened the mill the same year. Parker became one of South Carolina's most famous and influential industrialists. He used his mill as a social "experiment" and established a welfare program which made Monaghan one of a few "show" mills in the state. His work was praised by reformers and sociologists. Parker was very frank, however, about the motives behind the welfare program when he stated that any advancement of operatives was "incidental to the profitable running of the mills, and has not had any philanthropic or unselfish object on the part of the mill." According to Parker, any mill using welfare work did so "purely from a business standpoint for the advantage of the stockholders." Parker pioneered welfare work in cotton mill villages, for business and not moral reasons, and was praised for it. In fact by 1909, Monaghan Mills employed thirteen welfare workers, directed by Lawrence Peter Hollis, for its village of about 1,500 people.³²

The earliest and in some cases the only welfare work done by mills was providing schools for village children, which constitutionally the state should have provided. The educational system in South Carolina during this period, however, failed to provide schooling for all of the state's

³²The State, 22 June 1909, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL; Barbare, "Community Welfare Work," 25-26; and Laura Smith Ebaugh, "A Social History," in The Arts, 20-21.

white children, even though the state Constitution of 1895 guaranteed public education to all citizens. Because schools were neither abundant nor well staffed, especially in the rural areas, and because the state did not have a compulsory education law until 1915, the mills found it necessary to fill in the gap.³³ Mill men also realized that they were actually investing in the mill's future by educating the next generation of operatives as well as providing a type of "day care" for working mothers. Consequently, providing schools became an early form of mill welfare work.

The mill accepted responsibility for building the school house and furnishing it, and the county shared the cost of the teacher's salary with the mill. Because of the reputation of the mill villages, however, teachers needed encouragement to teach there. Rev. William Mills, a lecturer for the State Summer School held at Clemson in 1905, exhorted teachers to enter the mills. The mill village, Mills said, "constitutes the greatest opportunity for educating the people that the State ever saw or ever is likely to see again." Here was a captive audience of people in need of education which the state had been unable to provide.³⁴

³³McHugh, "The Family Labor System," 75; and Carlton, Mill and Town, 93-94, 185.

³⁴The State, 14 July 1905, 9, col. 4; see also Carlton, Mill and Town, 183.

Reformers, too, saw this as a great opportunity. They envisioned the mill school teacher as a noble and honest person who could teach by example. She also was to act as "surrogate parent" who could bring "the mill child under school control [and] . . . wean him from the attitudes of the mill village and integrate him into the "modern" world of town society."³⁵ The reformers believed further that the children would then affect their parents and help the whole family. In this way, education became the facility for "civilizing" mill children as well as the family.

The role of teachers in the mill was evident at Monaghan Mills. The mill opened a school in 1902 that ran for 9-10 months yearly. Monaghan, in conjunction with the Greenville County Board of Education, contracted with teachers to perform duties outside as well as inside the classroom. It was "stipulated that they should live in the village, paying and receiving visits, their influence out of the school being considered hardly secondary to that of the school." Through these visits, the teacher could offer advice to mothers on domestic matters as well as make sure that children of school age were in school and not in the mill. Not only was the teacher a noble and honest example for the children, she was there to assist the adults as

³⁵Carlton, Mill and Town, 183.

well. By 1904, Monaghan employed six female teachers and a female principal.³⁶

Many mills in South Carolina provided some welfare work during the 1910s and 1920s, but on a much smaller scale than at Monaghan. Club work was the main tool of the welfare program: girls' clubs, mothers' clubs, boys' clubs, sewing clubs, canning clubs, and many others. The most common, even in small mills, were mothers' clubs and girls' clubs. Welfare workers taught skills which young and old alike could take into the home and into society. The State newspaper reported the results of one well-run welfare program: "people dress better; keep their houses better; [and] keep their grounds better."³⁷ Thus welfare work helped individuals adapt to mill life and improve the communities in which they lived.

Of the 63 South Carolina mills surveyed in 1918, only 15 made no mention of welfare work programs for their operatives. Usually the mill supplied a community house

³⁶Letter from T. F. Parker to Mrs. M. A. Ravenel, 24 November 1902, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL; Parker, "The Cotton Mills of South Carolina, Part I," in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL; and Greenville News, 5 November 1902, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL. The school staff at Monaghan for 1904 included Miss Lily Shumate, principal; Misses Edyth McCarrell, Virginia Ligon, and Sally Groves, teachers; Miss Charlotte S. Porcher, assisted by Miss Mary Shumate, kindergarten; and Miss Priscilla Voorhees, domestic science and night classes. Miss Porcher was one of the first woman to earn her degree in Kindergarten Education at Winthrop College. Miss Voorhees was connected with the Young Women's Christian Association in the mill village. "Monaghan School Celebrates Anniversary," [ca. 1904], in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL.

³⁷The State, 27 June 1909, 3, col. 1-4.

where a welfare worker lived and centered her work. In the smaller mills, an operative's cottage would be converted into a center. The larger mills could afford to build separate and sometimes elaborate community houses. The community house also served as a focal point for activity in the community apart from the mill and as a place for games, reading, meetings, and classes. At Pacolet Mill, for example, *the community house doubled as the girls' club* house that featured a model home dining room, kitchen, and bedroom. Here the welfare worker taught the young girls about homemaking and nutrition. The dispensary and nurse's office were located there as well. Likewise at the Dunegan community house, which was cared for by the girls' club, young married women's club, and other ladies of the village, Miss Hazel Brockman offered a cooking class for "little mothers" and a graded night class as well as other work.³⁸

Judson Mills in Greenville did not have a community house, but there was a room in the school house for community activity. In 1925, Miss Alberta Fox became the welfare worker, succeeding Miss Doris Waddell of Chatham, New York, who left after one year's service at the mill to be married. Part of Miss Fox's work was to oversee the showers at the community room which were available to the children between 1 and 4 p.m. during the summer months. The young boys especially soon realized the pleasures of hot

³⁸Southern Textile Bulletin, 88, passim; Parker Progress (Greenville, S.C.), 10 November 1925; and *ibid.*, 22 January 1926.

water showers and greatly increased the demand. While most mill villages provided water to the houses by the 1920s, usually for tub bathing, showers were something of a new experience for most mill people.³⁹

Miss Bettie Richards began her work at Watts Mill at Laurens in 1919. The daughter of Governor John Richards, Miss Richards received degrees from Columbia College, Columbia University, and New York University. She also attended the Winthrop College Summer School in 1919. When Miss Richards arrived at Watts Mill, she worked out of a small house, but in 1927 the mill president's residence was converted into a community house. Miss Richards worked for 42 years at Watts Mill, first as welfare worker, then social worker, and finally as service director.⁴⁰

One of Miss Richards' duties was to help mothers with newborn babies. During the two weeks after birth, she would go into the home and take care of the baby. Miss Richards taught adult classes in reading and writing and some advanced subjects. She also worked with the Mothers' Club which had been formed in 1918 for village women to "participate in programs relating to the improvement of home

³⁹Parker Progress, 15, 22 May 1925; and *ibid.*, 1 July 1927.

⁴⁰Newspaper clippings, c. 1944, in the Bettie Richards Papers at South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina. John G. Richards, a planter from Liberty Hill, was elected Governor in 1926 as a Bleasite. He served one 4-year term during which he sought abolition of the Tax Commission and Board of Public Welfare as well as the enactment of various inane "blue laws." Wallace, South Carolina, 679-680.

life, and the civic and welfare needs of the community." Miss Richards' success with the club led her to assist in the establishment of such clubs at other mills, especially at Appleton Mill in Anderson.⁴¹

Other types of activities that women welfare workers performed at times included arranging for a community Christmas tree, picnics, and Girl Scout troops. At Monaghan in 1902, for example, six young ladies were organized into a committee to collect funds from operatives to buy presents to put under the tree for the needy children of the village. The mill supplemented the amount collected so that all of the children would receive something for Christmas. The tree project was a means of creating a sense of community and interdependence among mill people, discouraging the operatives from relying too much on mill welfare. By helping the girls' club give 39 widows a day-out picnic at Dunean in September of 1925, Miss Brockman also was trying to build community relationships. Girl Scout troops and Girl Reserves organized by welfare workers in the late 1910s and 1920s, were another attempt to get people working together outside of the mill.⁴²

Along with social problems, mill village life created health problems. Because of the poor sanitary conditions, children often contracted hookworm, a parasite which causes

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Greenville News, 5 November 1902; Parker Progress, 4 September 1925; and Barbare, "Community Welfare Work," 63.

the individual to appear pale and listless and stunts growth. Malaria, tuberculosis, and pellagra plagued operatives, as well as epidemics of smallpox and other contagious diseases. Accidents in the mill from lack of safety standards and inexperience with the machinery were also frequent.⁴³

Well aware of these problems, Thomas Parker again broke new ground when he began a health program and employed a nurse for his mill. The nurse, trained at Bellevue Hospital in New York City, began work at Monaghan in 1908. She most likely lived in the village's Young Women's Christian Association cottage, and supervised the medical dispensary. She also assisted the town doctor when he came to the village, handled cases not needing a doctor, and conducted follow-up work in the homes. In addition to her medical duties, the nurse also instructed mothers in child care through demonstrations and practical lectures, gave classes in preparing infant food and invalid nourishment. She also made home visits to provide private demonstrations in personal and domestic cleanliness, the need for fresh air in the home, and the tending of the ill. To assist her in her duties, the nurse formed a health club with 60 women from

⁴³For more information see Edward H. Beardsley, A History of Neglect: Health Care for Blacks and Mill Workers in the Twentieth-Century South (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987).

the village, which supported lectures and helped the nurse with social entertainments.⁴⁴

Realizing that healthy operatives usually meant efficient operatives, other mills followed Monaghan's lead. Most health programs were not as elaborate as the one at Monaghan. In some mills, the nurse doubled as the welfare worker, or the welfare worker served as an untrained nurse for the village. Pacolet Manufacturing Company near Spartanburg, for example, hired a trained nurse who also supervised the welfare work. She was assisted by "competent ladies" in the nursery and kindergarten. Children were kept free of charge in the nursery, and they received a free lunch while their mothers worked in the mill. While Pacolet had a trained nurse as welfare director, Excelsior Knitting Mills in Union County was more typical with one trained welfare worker who also cared for the sick in the village.⁴⁵

Dunean Mills in Greenville also had a health program. The mill hired Miss Debbie Grimes as community nurse in the early 1920s. She was succeeded by Miss Ida Elrod in 1925. Miss Elrod worked set hours Monday through Friday:

⁴⁴Ebaugh, "A Social History," 20; Parker, "The Cotton Mills"; "Health Club," in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL; and The State, 27 June 1909, 3, col. 1-4.

⁴⁵Southern Textile Bulletin, 43, 88. 1907 statistics show that Pacolet Manufacturing Company had 55,684 spindles, employed 900, and had a village population of 2,200, while Excelsior Knitting Mills had 5,624 spindles, employed 500, and had a village population of 1,000 - most mills in the state at the time were smaller than Excelsior and Union was among the top twenty large mills; Ebbie J. Watson, Handbook of South Carolina: Resources, Institutions and Industries of the State (Columbia: The State Company, 1907), 462.

Community House, 8-9 a.m.; mill, 9-10 a.m.; Community House 3 p.m. until the last patient was seen. She spent the rest of her time conducting home visits in the village. Miss Elrod also started a first aid class for the Girls' Club.⁴⁶ Health programs, like the ones at Monaghan, Pacolet, and Dunean, tried to combat the village's health problems and the mill people's health and living conditions by providing demonstrations and personal contact as well as ready medical attention.

During the 1920s, the welfare workers continued their work and tried to expand their programs to include the whole village. At Woodside Mill near Greenville in 1925, there were Y.W.C.A. parties, community clubs with women officials from the village, as well as girls' clubs and mothers' clubs. Similar clubs existed at Dunean, such as the Young Married Women's Club and the Wide-Awake Club for girls. And at American Spinning Company, Miss Cora H. Dodson took over the work started by Miss Melita Wilson in 1916. Monaghan Mills boasted record breaking kindergarten enrollment in 1925 with 130 children, up from 75 the previous year.⁴⁷ Many welfare workers brought in outside speakers to cover topics which were of interest to the community. The diverse work done by these women reflected the needs of the operatives as they became assimilated into the mill system.

⁴⁶Barbare, "Community Welfare Work," 67; and Parker Progress, 10 July, 11 September, 16, 23 October 1925.

⁴⁷Parker Progress, March 6, November 6 and 20, 1925; and *ibid.*, August 17, 1926.

Women hired directly by the mill owner as welfare worker were usually social workers, like Miss Bettie Richards, or teachers, like Charlotte Porcher, or nurses, like Miss Elrod. Miss Richards cared for infants and classes and had clubs for the young girls and mothers. Miss Porcher, as kindergarten teacher at Monaghan, conducted home visits and assisted the welfare workers. Miss Elrod provided health care and nutritional and medical advice. These women and their compeers worked to bring education, health improvements, and a sense of community to a displaced people.

Women entered the mill villages as welfare workers through outside organizations as well as being hired directly by the mill. Two such organizations were the Young Women's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.) and the Home Economic Extension Work at Winthrop College. These groups provided welfare workers for those mills willing to hire and support them. Textile mill reform was a new venture for the Y.W.C.A. Although active in the northeast among factory and sweatshop female workers since the 1860s, the Y.W.C.A. extended its industrial work to southern cotton mill areas between 1903 and 1910. While Y.W.C.A. workers focused on "Bible teaching, and noon-day evangelistic services in the factories" up north, southern textile mill owners preferred religious emphasis second to that of physical and mental

uplift.⁴⁸ Home Economic Extension Work was new as well, but because it was federally mandated and received federal funds, religion was not part of its program. Despite the differences in orientation, both groups provided a service to mill owners by supplying welfare workers. The mill accepted full responsibility for the support of these workers and the welfare program.

Some of Thomas Parker's more notable and innovative welfare work was with the Y.W.C.A. The National Committee of the Y.W.C.A. approached Thomas Parker and Captain Ellison A. Smyth, owner of Pelzer Manufacturing Company in Anderson County, in 1903 with a proposal to extend the organization's work into the cotton mill villages. Parker and Smyth expressed interest, and they each hired a Y.W.C.A. secretary and teacher. Both mills also furnished a cottage as a residence for the welfare workers and equipped other cottages for their work.⁴⁹

In agreeing to hire these welfare workers, however, Parker emphasized to the National Committee that religious work should be kept to a minimum. This was in keeping with

⁴⁸Anne Pridmore, "A History of the Industrial Program of the Young Women's Christian Association of the United States of America" (Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1941), 3-5; and Grace H. Wilson, The Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Young Women's Christian Association (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, Bureau of Publications, 1933), 4-7.

⁴⁹Greenville News, 24 April 1904, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL; and The Trinity Evangel (Trinity Episcopal Parish, Columbia, S.C.), June 1904, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL.

his attitude toward welfare work: do what needs to be done to produce an effective worker. Parker felt that the operatives were in greater need of instruction in nutrition, health care, and house keeping than in religious studies. He did not see religion as a means of enhancing productivity, therefore the welfare workers' time was to be spent teaching the practical aspects of better living instead. He requested welfare workers who could help his operatives in their transition from farm to factory and who could create a community out of so many individual families.⁵⁰

This type of work was a departure from what was expected of the Y.W.C.A. because the Association had always emphasized Christian mission work. Miss Emma Hays, Y.W.C.A. field secretary, explained their welfare work in the textile mills:

Local secretaries, trained, cultured, Christian women, will work in the mill villages, along the lines of hygiene, domestic science, dress-making as may be found necessary. The moral and mental up-lifting of the girls will not be neglected.⁵¹

The work established at Pelzer and Monaghan mills focused on social and physical uplift with moral uplift as secondary, allowing the Y.W.C.A. to follow their mission in a modified form. Although the religious aspect remained, the textile mill work done by the Association was not "missionary" in

⁵⁰Letter from Parker in Cotton, 15 May 1904, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL.

⁵¹Greenville News, 10 January 1904, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL.

nature. Trained to teach cooking, sewing, and other industrial skills, the Y.W.C.A. welfare worker came into the village to assist the mill worker in the attempt to adapt to mill life.⁵²

To begin the work at Monaghan Mills, Miss Lillian Long of Rochester, New York, and Miss Priscilla Vorhees of Ohio set up domestic sciences and arts classes, clubs, and social events, as well as religious meetings and Bible classes. During the first year, Long and Vorhees gave health talks and other lectures, taught sewing and cooking classes, and conducted a night school for single women and mothers who worked in the mill. All together about 145 students attended the Y.W.C.A. classes at Monaghan. Likewise at Pelzer mill, the secretary and teacher lived "as one of the people, thus teaching by example cleanliness and order in housekeeping." Clubs and classes in cooking and sewing were formed to compliment the school.⁵³

A 1905-1906 Y.W.C.A. annual report for Monaghan Mills details the Association's welfare work activities. While reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic were taught in the night school, classes were lightly attended. One reason

⁵²Letter from Parker in Cotton, 15 May 1904, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL; and Pridmore, "A History of the Industrial Program," 28-29.

⁵³The Trinity Evangel, June 1904; Greenville News, 10 January 1904; ibid., 24 April 1904; Young Women's Christian Association of North and South Carolina, 1903-1904, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL; and "Welfare Work in This State," The State, 22 June 1909, all found in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL.

for the low attendance was that few operatives could manage working twelve hours and then attend class for another hour or two. Despite poor adult participation, classes in cookery, sewing, millinery, basketry, and embroidery were attended by 1,856 young girls. The twenty social events sponsored by the Y.W.C.A. received 1,149 attendants, and the two Sunday services, two Sunday School classes, and two Bible study courses held each week also were highly successful.⁵⁴ The work of the Y.W.C.A. at Monaghan Mills was similar to welfare work in other mills. There were clubs and classes and social and religious activities. The only aspect which separated them from Home Economic Extension workers was their inclusion of religious instruction.

While Y.W.C.A. industrial work began in 1903, it was not until 1914 that Home Economic Extension work started. In that year, Congress passed the Smith-Lever Agricultural Extension Act which allowed certain states to provide for cooperative work between the land grant and agricultural colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture. Monies allotted were for hiring qualified men and women to visit in the rural areas and to provide instruction in farming and home economics. In 1915, South Carolina accepted the terms of the bill and selected Clemson College as the administrating institution. The state legislature

⁵⁴"Annual Statement of the Young Women's Christian Association of Monaghan Mills for the Year Ending 31 March 1906," 4, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL.

appropriated money for "extension work in household economics, home and rural school sanitation, especially in mill and rural districts." Clemson began the program in agreement with Winthrop College, with Clemson providing agricultural extension and Winthrop furnishing home economic extension work. At Winthrop, Miss Edith L. Parrott became the state Supervisor of Home Economic Extension Work. Her able assistant, Miss Mary E. Frayser, was the state Agent for Mill Community Work.⁵⁵

Miss Frayser, a sociology teacher at Winthrop College, inaugurated welfare work at seventeen mills in 1916, each with a woman in charge. Of the fourteen women assigned to the mills, five were South Carolinians and graduates of Winthrop College.⁵⁶ Also appointed at this time was Marjorie Potwin to Saxon Mills in Spartanburg. Potwin said

⁵⁵Reports and Resolutions, Report of the Superintendent of Education, 1913, Vol. 1, 709-10; 1916, Vol. 2, 450-452, 489; and 1917, Vol. 2, 13. The co-author of the Smith-Lever Act was South Carolinian Asbury F. Lever, born in 1875 in Lexington County; he graduated from Georgetown Law School in 1899 and served in the state Legislature before going to Congress. J. C. Hemphill, Men of Mark in South Carolina, Vol. II (Washington: Men of Mark Publishing Company, 1908), 328-333. Winthrop College started a mill village betterment program in 1912 with Miss Frayser in charge; this work became the Home Extension program under Smith-Lever.

⁵⁶Miss Mary Butler of Greenville, Class of 1913, to Hamilton-Carhartt Mills in Rock Hill; Miss Mary Hickson of Rock Hill, Class of 1913, to Arcade Mills and Victoria Mills in Rock Hill; Miss Jennie Boyd of Chappells, Class of 1913, to Mills Manufacturing Company in Greenville; Miss Melita Wilson of Rock Hill, Class of 1915, to American Spinning Mills in Greenville; and Miss Eloise Dublin of Pendleton, Class of 1913, to Springstein Mills in Chester. Reports and Resolutions, Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry, Labor Division, 1917, Vol. 1, 38-39.

of the activities around the community house: there were the usual oyster-suppers and ice-cream feast as well as "musical and dramatic programs and community socials and young people's parties." She also credited the operatives for doing most of the organizing for the events. Of the community house at Saxon, Potwin stated that it was busy all day, with the children using it during the daytime for domestic science classes and school rooms and adults using the house after working hours for night school, reading, and socials. Potwin portrays the community house as the focus of the mill village, bringing people together to create a sense of community. Miss Mary Hickson directed a similar program at Arcade Mills where she taught domestic science and art classes in the community house.⁵⁷

In 1918, the federal appropriations for the Home Economic Extension Work were cut. There were not enough funds to keep Miss Frayser in her position as State Agent for Mill Community Work. Despite the loss of Miss Frayser, mill welfare work continued to grow under Miss Parrott's guidance. In 1919, the Commissioner of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry reported that Piedmont Manufacturing Mill in Greenville County had a woman in charge of the work with women and girls. Winnsboro and Wateree Mills, in Fairfield and Kershaw Counties respectively, hired factory nurses who lived in the villages. Langley, Bath, and

⁵⁷Potwin, Cotton Mill People, 123-131; and Southern Textile Bulletin, 227.

Clearwater Mills in Aiken County each engaged welfare workers, built community houses, and opened nurseries.⁵⁸ In just three years, the Home Economic Extension Program placed welfare workers in over twenty mill villages.

The Y.W.C.A. and the Home Economic Extension program provided an important service to mill owners. By offering to secure a welfare worker for them, these organizations saved the mill owner from having to search for someone to direct their welfare program. These organizations, also, promoted welfare work and perhaps convinced an otherwise uninterested mill owner to begin a welfare program. The type of work was the same as that done by welfare workers hired directly by a mill, with the exception of the Y.W.C.A. workers who extended their work to include moral uplift. For those mill men, however, who wanted welfare workers but not the financial responsibility, home missionaries provided an answer.

Women welfare workers hired directly by the mills were not the only welfare workers operating in the mills. Some men directed mill welfare programs, such as L. P. Hollis at Monaghan Mills, and men were hired to work with the male operatives. Of greater importance, however, was another group of women who conducted welfare programs similar to those discussed above but were not hired directly by the mill. In sharp contrast to the woman welfare worker hired

⁵⁸Reports and Resolutions, 1918, Vol. 1, 9; and *ibid.*, 1919, Vol. 1, 28.

by the mill was the home missionary from mainstream Protestant denominations who volunteered to work in the mill villages and was supported at the church's expense. Religious up-lift was the emphasis of the home missionaries' work, with industrial welfare secondary. Despite their organizational and philosophical differences, the combined efforts of these women in assisting the mill people provided most mill owners the means to furnish welfare work in their villages.

Chapter 3

Missionaries to the Mills

Social workers, nurses, teachers, and women hired directly by the mills were not the only welfare workers in the mill villages. Church women and missionaries, supported largely by their home church and only indirectly by the mill, also entered into this type of welfare work. Mill owners who saw the church in the same light as they saw the school, as an institution of both up-lift and control, allowed Protestant denominations to establish missions and congregations in the villages. Once a congregation was established, the mill usually provided a church building and paid part of the minister's salary. Publicly, this gesture earned the mill men great praise from the reformers, but the mill's actions were not so much charity as a desire to control the churches which came into the village.⁵⁹ Despite such self-interested motives, mill owners recognized the advantages offered by religious work and encouraged it to some degree.

While church women were active with missionary work, their efforts were directed mainly toward foreign missions before the 1900s. Most church women devoted their home

⁵⁹Carlton, Mill and Town, 104, 120; McDonald, Southern Mill Hills, 28; and Pope, Millhands and Preachers, 38-41.

mission work solely to supporting the minister and maintaining the parsonage, as is evidenced by the name of the women's society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South: Woman's Parsonage and Home Mission Society. In the early 1900s, however, women in the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist, and Methodist churches began small home missions in South Carolina's mill villages out of their own concerns for the welfare of the children and in response to the outcries of reformers.

In general, churches were slow to find a solution to the mill problem, yet complained bitterly that something had to be done. The churches seemed "hardly awake to the opportunity and the problem" in terms of their early response. In 1899, the Southern Christian Advocate, the weekly voice of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, decried the abuse of child labor and the deplorable living conditions in mill villages. The mill operatives, it continued, were "an open field for the efforts of the Home Missions Society." At the same time, the paper chided the church and the women's society for their lethargy and inertia in reacting to the conditions in the mills. Several reasons were offered: a history of non-doers in the societies, negligence and lack of an organizational system, helter-skelter efforts, inefficient methods of work, and insufficient resources.⁶⁰ The women in the Methodist Church

⁶⁰Ligon, "The Relation of the Church," 4; Southern Christian Advocate (Columbia, S.C.), 12 January, 12; and ibid., 23 February 1899, 12; herein after cited as Advocate.

and in the other mainstream Protestant churches gradually responded with home missions.

The Presbyterian Church began work in the mill villages in 1903 when Rev. William H. Mills went to Horse Creek Valley in Aiken County for three years. He had little success except "to discover the needs of the work and reveal to the Synod the conditions that have to be met in the work." Despite Rev. Mills' protestations, by 1909 few Presbyterians had heeded the call to help with the mill problem. Rev. Lowry Davis of the Presbyterian Church in Greenville wrote that

Where anything has been attempted, too frequently it was by men and women who deemed it a wonderful condescension to work with mill people. Very often mill people have no idea who Presbyterians are, or what they stand for.⁶¹

None of the mainstream churches, it seemed, knew quite how to address the growing mill problem in the early 1900s.

Rev. Davis' admonition apparently had an effect, because by 1913 the Presbyterian Church had missions in several mill villages around South Carolina. While most of the Presbyterian mission workers in the mills were apparently men, a female worker was active at Lydia Cotton Mills at this time. Evidently the church felt that men best met the requirements of the work.⁶²

⁶¹F. D. Jones and W. H. Mills, eds., History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina Since 1850 (Columbia: The Synod of South Carolina, 1926), 323; and Rev. Lowry Davis, "Cotton Mill Problem," The Home Mission Herald, August 1909, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL.

⁶²Ligon, "The Relation of the Church," Appendix 1, 5.

In the 1920s, Presbyterian women's work in the mills was still at a minimum. Miss Claudia Fraser, of Sumter, who was a graduate of Mary Baldwin Seminary and the Presbyterian Assembly's Training School for Lay Workers, worked in the Great Falls mill village in 1923. Miss White, also from the Assembly's Training School, spent the summer of 1926 doing "industrial mission work" at the Pelzer mill village. Industrial mission work was similar to the Y.W.C.A.'s welfare work where domestic skills and moral uplift came together. Presbyterian women were involved in home mission work, but they gave most of their time and resources to assisting African-Americans and the mountain people outside of the mills. Presbyterian women saw a greater need among these people than in the mill villages.⁶³

The Lutheran Church began home mission work in the mill villages in the early 1900s. In 1903 mission work, with men as the primary participants, started in both Greenwood and Spartanburg. The following year the church built a chapel in the Olympia mill village in Columbia. Unlike the Presbyterian Church which directed its mission work to other areas, the Lutheran Church records little home mission activity at this time. Although limited in their efforts,

⁶³Margaret A. Gist, ed., Presbyterian Women of South Carolina (n.p.: Woman's Auxiliary of the Synod of South Carolina, 1929), 490-491, 635.

the Lutheran Church did contribute to the effort to improve mill life.⁶⁴

Likewise, the Episcopal Church, under the leadership of Rev. Churchill Satterlee of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral of Columbia, played a role in mill village welfare work at the Olympia mill. While on vacation in the North in 1902, Rev. Satterlee raised funds to build a mission house in Columbia's mill district. Olympia Mill donated a lot for the house, and the church completed construction in 1903. The mission house had small rooms for games, a hall for meetings, a medical dispensary, and living quarters for the vicar and the deaconess, Miss Annie J. Graham. As deaconess, she was a consecrated worker of the Episcopal Church which enabled her to assist the minister and administer all sacraments except communion.⁶⁵

Sunday school, night school, and club work were the initial activities at the Olympia mission house. Even though the Girls' Friendly Club learned basketry and other domestic arts, their stated purpose was "to promote purity of life, dutifulness to parent, faithfulness to employers and thrift," which reflects the careful blending of religion, middle class values, and mill control. Miss

⁶⁴The Olympia chapel was the only work listed for the Lutheran Church in a 1913 survey of religious welfare work in the state compiled by J.F. Ligon for his thesis work. The State, 10 November 1903, 3, col. 2; and *ibid.*, 27 September 1904, 8, col. 2.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 22 February 1903, 16, col. 2; and Samuel S. Hill, ed., Encyclopedia of Religion in the South (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1984), 195.

Graham also started a Mothers' Meeting and a Boys' Club.⁶⁶ With the exception of the religious aspect, the clubs' objectives reflected the aim of most welfare work programs. The Mothers' Meeting taught the women about nutrition, cooking, health care, and other domestic related issues. And the Boys' Club provided supervised activities for young boys whose parents worked in the mill. The clubs helped the women and children learn to adjust physically and socially.

Florence Pauline Jones replaced Deaconess Graham at the mission house in 1904. Miss Jones, a member of Trinity, was the first deaconess to be consecrated to the office in South Carolina. While she was in Olympia, Deaconess Jones greatly expanded the mission work. An accident ward and a reading room were added to the mission house, and classes in gardening and other arts were offered. In 1905, a day nursery and orphanage opened in the village in two houses on Sixth Street, under the care of Mother Mary Margaret, who was "newly arrived to help with the mill work."⁶⁷ Deaconess Jones shaped her work to the needs of the community.

Trinity's work in Olympia continued for several years. In 1908, Misses Mary and Caroline Preston came to the mission house. They taught sewing and cooking classes, shifting the focus of the mission work even more to

⁶⁶The Trinity Evangel, 1 April 1903, 18-20; and The State, 25 January 1905, 1, col. 7.

⁶⁷The State, 19 July 1904, 2, col. 2; and *ibid.*, 25 January 1905, 1, col. 7.

emphasize domestic sciences instruction for the young girls. They realized that spiritual uplift was not enough to solve the mill problem, and hoped that "through the influence of the enthusiasm of these children the whole community will be cleaned and made homelike."⁶⁸ The Misses Preston were in line with the social reformers who felt that the children were the key to mill village reform.

The work at Olympia was not the only example of Episcopal Church welfare work. By 1913, the mill villages at Graniteville, Bath, Langley, and Clearwater all had deaconesses, and the mills at Spartanburg and Ninety-Six had Episcopal missions.⁶⁹ It is not known if the missions at Langley, Bath, and Clearwater were still active when the community house was built in 1919. However, like the Presbyterians and the Lutherans, the Episcopal Church never committed itself to extensive statewide welfare activity. The Olympia mission work was its main effort, due in large measure to the efforts of the Trinity congregation.

The largest churches in most mill villages in South Carolina were the Baptist and the Methodist. The women of these churches were also the most active in mill welfare work. J. F. Ligon found that the Baptist Church State Mission Board employed thirteen missionaries for the mill

⁶⁸Ibid., 9 November 1908, 8, col. 1.

⁶⁹Ligon, "The Relation of the Church," Appendix 1, 3.

villages in 1909, six of whom were South Carolinians.⁷⁰ It is not known at which mills these women worked, but this number of Baptist missionaries far exceeds that of most of the other churches at the time.

The work of the Baptist Church was evident at Brandon Mills in Greenville, where the Church established a nursery in 1917 with Mrs. W. W. Smith as matron. She started with three children, and by 1925 she had 50-60 babies and small children under her care. In addition to providing child care, part of the time was spent in daily devotional exercises. Mrs. Smith was not the only missionary at Brandon. She was joined by Miss Florrie Lee Lawton, a Baptist community worker from St. Petersburg, Florida. Miss Lawton was a graduate of Greenville Woman's College, a Baptist Church supported school. She started at Brandon Mills in 1920 as a teacher, and became the community worker the following year. Miss Lawton, as did Mrs. Smith, regarded moral uplift as important to the success of her welfare work. In 1925, however, Miss Lawton resigned to be with her family in Florida.⁷¹

The Baptist Church also encouraged the students at its Greenville Woman's College to participate in mill welfare

⁷⁰The six missionaries were Misses Wright and Brumfield of Greenville, Miss Dowell of Rock Hill, Miss Dabney of Lancaster, Miss Rushton of Columbia, and Miss Carroll of McColl. Ligon, "The Relation of the Church," Appendix 1, 1; and The State, 19 November 1909, 5, col. 1.

⁷¹Parker Progress, 20, 27 March; and *ibid.*, 11 December 1925.

work on a volunteer basis. In 1913, the Y.W.C.A. at the school sponsored a "Sunday Mill Afternoon Club" so that four women could conduct mission study at a mill village. Also, the school's Kindergarten Department sent volunteer teachers to Camperdown Mill kindergarten and student assistants to several mill kindergartens in the Greenville area.⁷² Despite its many efforts, the Baptist Church's mission work paled when compared to that of the Methodist Church.

Unlike the other Protestant churches, the Methodist Church women initially tried a different approach to mill welfare work by establishing women's missionary auxiliaries. In 1899, the Women's Home Missions Society became an active organization in South Carolina, and established more than thirty missions auxiliaries in Methodist Churches around the state that year.⁷³ The women used their auxiliaries as corps of untrained volunteers to make home visits, to take food to the sick and clothing to the needy, to hand out religious literature, and to attend to any other welfare needs of the mill people.

By 1903, however, the mill work overwhelmed the auxiliaries' volunteers. The Women's Home Missions Society responded that "we recognize the great importance of the mill problem and confess that we are unable to solve it."⁷⁴ To provide a more workable system, Miss Belle Harris,

⁷²Ligon, "The Relation of the Church," Appendix 1, 2.

⁷³Advocate, 6 April, 12; 16 November 1899, 13.

⁷⁴Ibid., 1 January 1903, 9.

President of the Women's Home Missions Society for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, convinced the General Conference in 1902 to allow Deaconesses to work in the South. The office of Deaconess was placed under the supervision of the Women's Home Missions Society. Used effectively in the North among miners, immigrants, and other needy groups, the church women hoped that the deaconess system could help them better address the southern mill problem.⁷⁵

In the Methodist Church, a deaconess had to train for her work, and in this manner was better prepared than volunteers to meet the needs of the mill people. A deaconess was single or widowed, at least 23 years old but not older than 65; she was a church member in good standing and exhibited fitness for her duties. She had a high school education, two years of college, and the necessary study in an accredited training school such as Scarritt Bible and Training School in St. Louis, Missouri, or the Methodist Training School in Nashville, Tennessee. These schools provided eight departments: Bible study; moral philosophy, Christian evidences, and doctrines; church

⁷⁵Hill, Encyclopedia, 92; and Advocate, 18 December 1902, 4. In 1901, the Home Missions Board tried to expand the number of home missionaries by offering special scholarships and courses at Scarritt to train workers; despite this, the demand could not be met and the request for deaconesses was put forward in 1902; John Patrick McDowell, The Social Gospel in the South: The Woman's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1886-1939 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 62.

history; sociology; industries; church and city mission work; general instruction; and nursing. Deaconesses took courses in each department.⁷⁶

After training, a deaconess then had to be chosen for consecration to the office by a bishop of the church, and once consecrated, her work was reviewed annually for recertification. If a deaconess was found unfit for the work, she was retired and her certificate revoked. She wore a special uniform to signify her office: a black dress with white turnover collar and cuffs and a white bonnet with white lawn ties. In 1921, some modifications were made to the uniform to bring it in line with current clothing fashions, and by 1927 the uniform was a simple dress in black or white with a tailored hat to match. A deaconess was given a gold pin at her consecration which was also part of the uniform. She was not salaried but was maintained by the local church employing her services.⁷⁷

Also participating in welfare work from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was the city missionary. Organized in 1893, city mission work began as an attempt to address social problems among the urban poor through physical as well as spiritual uplift. Local governing boards consisted

⁷⁶Woman's Missionary Council, Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, var. dates), 1929, 330.

⁷⁷Advocate, 18 December 1902, 4; *ibid.*, 28 May 1903, 12; *ibid.*, 25 August 1904, 11; and Report of the Woman's Missionary Council, 1927, 330; *ibid.*, 1921, 161; and *ibid.*, 1927, 138-139.

of two representatives from participating women's auxiliaries. One of the most common aspects of city mission work was establishing a kindergarten for the city's poor children, and this concern for children led Methodist women in the South into the area of child labor and textile mills. Thus a city missionary could work not only among a city's poor but also among a mill village's residents.⁷⁸

Like her counterpart, the city missionary had to meet certain requirements in order to enter the home mission field. City missionaries received the same training as deaconesses, but they were not consecrated. This prohibited city missionaries from acting as ministers' assistants, but they could serve in all other mission capacities. Although paid on the same scale as a deaconess, a city missionary was employed by a City Mission Board and not a church. She did not wear a uniform, yet her duties and actions were similar to a deaconess: caring for the sick and bereaved, making home visits, leading or attending prayer meetings, and assisting the people in any way possible.⁷⁹

Because the need for mill work was so extensive, the demand for deaconesses and city missionaries could not be met. Less than a year after deaconesses entered the southern missions field, there were over 50 applications by churches and mill owners for deaconesses and city

⁷⁸McDowell, Social Gospel, 12-13, 39.

⁷⁹By-laws of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Report of the Woman's Missionary Council, 1922, 349-352.

missionaries to work in mill villages. In 1904, there were six women trained and in the field and only six more in training, so supply was not keeping up with demand.

Washington Street Methodist Church in Columbia was one of the lucky applicants, receiving city missionary Miss Nora Johnson, of Spartanburg County, who began work in Granby Mill village. Her successor in 1906 was Miss Hattie Rushton, also a city missionary. Miss Rushton served Granby, Olympia, Capital City, and Richland mills.

Dedicated to the cause of helping mill workers in their transition to an industrial and Christian lifestyle, Miss Rushton spent 156 hours in the field, made 322 home visits, taught five classes, and attended numerous meetings during June of 1906. Miss Rushton served the Columbia mill district for nine years.⁸⁰

The first deaconess in the state was Miss Eugenia Smith of Union. After graduating from Scarritt Training School in 1906, Central Church in Spartanburg hired her to assist the minister and work part-time in the Spartan Mills village. Like Miss Rushton, Deaconess Smith worked diligently with the mill people. Her annual report for 1907 showed that she made 4,023 home visits, attended the sick and suffering, distributed flower bouquets to the sick and bereaved, led or

⁸⁰McDowell, The Social Gospel, 64; Advocate, 23 July 1903, 11; ibid., 28 April 1904, 11; ibid., 19 July 1906, 7; and Walter I. Herbert, ed., Fifty Wonderful Years, 1878-1928; The Story of Missionary Work by Methodist Women in South Carolina Methodist Episcopal Church, South (n.p.: Jubilee Committee of the two South Carolina Conferences, 1928), 185.

attended 75 meetings, and helped with the community Christmas Tree. Deaconess Smith averaged 77 home visits a week, a staggering amount by itself and more so with her other work. In 1908, Miss Annie Mutch replaced Deaconess Smith and expanded the activities to include cottage meetings and sewing classes for young girls.⁸¹

Miss Mutch brought a new focus to the work in South Carolina when she asked that a Wesley House be established at the mill. It functioned like the community houses built by mill owners who hired welfare workers, but the Wesley House also served as a religious center. Here the bodies and souls of the mill people could be helped through industrial instructions and religious study, and here also the deaconess lived among the people as an example of Christian living.

The Spartanburg Wesley House was the first of three Wesley Houses to open in South Carolina. In 1909, Central Church raised enough money to convince the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South to authorize a House, and in July of 1910, the Spartanburg Wesley House opened in Spartan Mills. On the first floor was a large gymnasium with three showers and one tub, a large reception hall, library, nursery, domestic science

⁸¹Lois P. Charles, Sketches of South Carolina Missionaries and Deaconesses in Home and Foreign Fields, 1892-1933 (n.p., n.d.), 3; Advocate, 13 February, 7; and ibid., 12 November 1908, 6-7.

room, and front and back porches. The second floor was fitted with living quarters for the deaconesses.⁸²

Orangeburg was the site of the second Wesley House. It began in 1913 when Deaconess Sarah Regan, of Georgia, moved into a six-room building where she set up a library, sewing school, Mothers' and Young Ladies' Clubs, and Junior Boys' Clubs. She also used the Wesley House to bring together city and mill folks to try to erase the stigma attached to the mill people. Members of the town church were invited to special events at the Wesley House, and mill workers were taken to revivals in town.⁸³ Deaconess Regan and her successors saw their role as both social and spiritual healers.

The third Wesley House established in a South Carolina textile mill village was at Glencoe Mill in Columbia. Edith Leighty, who served as deaconess at Spartan Mills 1912-1917, surrendered her deaconess certificate in 1922 and became a city missionary. She received appointment to Columbia in 1923 to begin work in Glencoe Mill under the auspices of the Columbia City Mission Board. By November of that year, the Board had furnished a four room cottage given by T. H. Wannamaker, president of the mill, as a Wesley House. Miss Leighty began a night school, sewing classes, games, neighborhood prayer meetings, a children's missionary

⁸²Advocate, 4 August 1910, 7; and *ibid.*, 1 February 1923, 9.

⁸³Advocate, 28 January 1913, 13.

society, and daily vacation Bible School during the summers. Although there was no kindergarten in the village, volunteers drove children to one in town.⁸⁴

Deaconesses and city missionaries worked at other mills in the state. At Clifton Mill in Spartanburg County, Deaconess Mamie Reames served as pastor's assistant 1910-1912, and Deaconess Alice Sheider, of St. George, served from 1912 to about 1915. The work at Clifton closed after Deaconess Sheider left. Ila Bollick arrived at Langley Manufacturing Company as city missionary in 1908 and served until about 1911. Although she saw promise in her work, it was discontinued after she left. Ellen Gainey, of North Carolina, served McColl and Bennettsville as city missionary from 1907 through 1908. And Eliza McCullough was city missionary in Newberry 1912-1914. She held sewing classes at West End Mill, supervised the "Summers House", named in honor of Mollohon Mills president George W. Summers, and conducted night school at Newberry Mill.⁸⁵ All of these women conducted prayer meetings, assisted the pastor, visited in the homes, and held classes and clubs.

These missionaries in the mill villages did not stay at one mission for very long. Part of the reason was the way

⁸⁴Report of the Woman's Missionary Council, 1922, 172; *ibid.*, 1926, 209-210; Advocate, 2 August 1923, 9; *ibid.*, 8 November 1923, 9; and *ibid.*, 4 June 1925.

⁸⁵Deaconess Alice Sheider later went to Spartanburg Wesley House. Advocate, 25 July 1907, 6-7; *ibid.*, 4 June 1908, 6; *ibid.*, 10 December 1908, 7; *ibid.*, 5 May 1910, 6; *ibid.*, 15 June 1911, 7; *ibid.*, 11 April 1912, 7; *ibid.*, 2 May 1912, 7; and *ibid.*, 21 May 1914, 7.

the Methodist Church appointed its workers. As with the clergy, the church appointed home missionaries annually, and especially in the early years of the office of deaconess, the home missionaries moved to a different mission after a few years. With so few in the field, the church felt compelled to spread their work around to the areas needing deaconesses and city missionaries. For example, Deaconess Nannette Hudson, of Texas, received appointment to Greenwood Mills in 1912, but in 1915 she moved to Spartanburg. City missionary Alice Sheider experienced a similar situation. She served Clifton Mills for two years when she received an appointment to a Wesley House in Birmingham, Alabama.⁸⁶

The power of appointment was not the sole or most common reason for a home missionary to leave her work. The most reported cause was illness, either personal or family. City missionary Mrs. Sudie Wright, for example, left Orangeburg in 1912 after serving for only three years in order to care for her sick father. Again at Orangeburg several years later, Deaconess Dora Hoover became ill and left the Wesley House in 1920. Her replacement was Deaconess Cora Borchers, of Birmingham, Alabama, who was called away in early 1921 because of serious illness at home. With no replacement available, the Orangeburg Wesley House closed temporarily.⁸⁷

⁸⁶Report of the Woman's Missionary Council, 1916, 151.

⁸⁷Advocate, 14 March 1912, 7; and Report of the Woman's Missionary Council, 1920-1921, 218.

It is little wonder that more of these welfare workers did not leave for health reasons. Their work was demanding, both physically and emotionally. Not only did these missionaries conduct sewing and cooking classes, oversee Mothers' and Girls' and Boys' Clubs, direct health clinics, and provide social entertainments, they also held prayer meetings, led Sunday School classes, distributed Christian literature, and visited the sick, elderly, and shut-ins. In Hattie Rushton's work, she served four mills in the Columbia area, and during one month she averaged 80 home visits and 132 family meetings a week as well as teaching classes and leading meetings.⁸⁸ While Miss Rushton did not leave her work due to illness, her schedule is typical of most home missionaries.

Deaconess Belle Simrill, of Chester, was not so fortunate. She arrived at the Spartanburg Wesley House in 1920 to manage the kindergarten. Deaconess Simrill cared for thirty children, led the Mothers' Club and Home Makers' Club, conducted visits in the village, and attended to other work around the Wesley House. Unfortunately, Deaconess Simrill suffered a nervous breakdown in late 1924 and was forced to retire.⁸⁹ The deaconess living in the village not only faced a demanding daily schedule, but she had the added

⁸⁸Advocate, 19 July 1906, 7.

⁸⁹Belle Simrill was a graduate of Columbia College, attended summer courses at Winthrop College and the University of Virginia, and majored in kindergarten at Methodist Training School. Report of the Woman's Missionary Council, 1920-1926 passim.

responsibility of being on call during all hours, seven days a week.

While each Protestant denomination differed in the extent of mill welfare work they engaged in, the approaches were similar. These church women entered into welfare work with a missionary zeal, recognizing that an important part of their work was to minister to the mill people's spiritual and social needs. Like her secular counterpart, the Christian missionary strove to improve the mill people's health, nutritional knowledge, housekeeping abilities, and adult education, but she also focused on their social and moral attitudes and activities by offering religious instruction. Most club meetings opened and closed with a short devotional; nurseries often had a devotional time; and because the missionary lived in the village she could teach by example. The main differences between the types of welfare work done by mill-sponsored and church-sponsored workers were the added dimension of religion and moral uplift in the work and the low cost to the mill owner. Yet mill owners held these differences in account when deciding what type of welfare program they wanted.

Chapter 4

Viewpoints

Women welfare workers entered the South Carolina textile mill villages in different ways, but each found herself involved in similar work. Whether she was hired directly by the mill, came through a secular organization such as the Y.W.C.A., or was a church sponsored home missionary, she still taught domestic science classes, oversaw a community house, visited in the mill homes, helped in the clinic in some manner, and was social director for the village, as well as any other additional duties. The work of these women has been explored above, yet the question remains: what was the response of the various parties touched by welfare work programs. The limited sources available indicate that mill owners viewed welfare work as a sound business practice and a means of worker control. The mill workers held mixed views ranging from appreciation to contempt. And the welfare worker also had mixed reactions from total frustration to a sense of personal satisfaction.

Mill owners gradually accepted welfarism as good business practice. The argument went that by promoting a program that helped the worker make the transition from the field to the factory, by replacing his traditional rural

values and folkways with those of the town-based middle class, the mill owner would receive in return a better, more stable, more loyal, and dependable operative. The theory of welfarism readily gained acceptance among management, but it was slow to be put into practice, as a 1904 letter to the editor in The State demonstrated. The writer questioned why mill owners were not embracing welfare programs more quickly when, in his opinion, providing welfare was "the strongest invitation to bring in a superior class of operatives" and a way to develop "an ever-improving class of laborers will be developed." Thomas F. Parker credited his welfare program with transforming the workers at Monaghan Mill from "mostly strangers to each other" to "mingling very generally" in a community "full of enjoyable and beneficial activities." Parker went on to cite the workers' improved "general appearance and deportment" as the main and visible evidence of the program's value.⁹⁰

The benefits of a welfare program became gospel when in 1918 the Southern Textile Bulletin, the voice of the textile world, stated its belief that welfarism was a "legitimate expense of operating a cotton mill." The same article suggested that by this time, welfare programs were in place in many mills because those mills that resisted welfare work were "looked upon as unsafe and behind the times." Whether

⁹⁰Victor I. Masters, Graniteville, Letter to the Editor, The State, 21 March 1904, in Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL; and Thomas F. Parker, "Important Increase in Welfare Work During the Year," Textile Manufacturing Journal, 2 January 1909, Monaghan Mills Scrapbook, GCPL.

or not peer pressure led mill owners to establish welfare programs, owners used welfarism, in part, to improve their workforce.⁹¹

A welfare program was utilized also because the welfare worker provided the owner with eyes into the community, and therefore greater control over his workforce. The owner relied on the supervisors and foremen to alert him to any problems in the mill, but it was difficult for him to gain information about what was happening among the people in the mill village. *The supervisor could note activities on the streets, but he generally did not visit in the homes.* The welfare worker, however, could move discreetly and with some freedom in and out of the homes. The welfare worker was compelled to walk a fine line between being an emissary for the mill owner and an advocate for mill worker rights. The owner required her to assist the operatives without pampering or interfering with their work, and to bring to management's attention any cases of illness, need, or malingering, as well as to process workers' grievances against the mill. Often the welfare worker tried to sway the operative to the owner's point of view, but this was not always the case. For example, Hattie Hylton, welfare worker at Dan River Mills in Virginia, in response to operative complaints of feeling "driven" by overseers, suggested that overseers and superintendents attend a lecture series on the

⁹¹Southern Textile Bulletin, p. 5; Newby, Plain Folk, 263-265; Brandes, American Welfare Capitalism, 8, 135; and Axinn and Levin, Social Welfare, 207.

welfare program. She attempted to teach these men how, by their own actions, they could "breed more contended, loyal, more faithful and efficient" operatives.⁹²

While Miss Hylton was still within the bounds of her job, some welfare workers became too involved with the operatives. One such case was in a North Carolina mill where the welfare worker, having been made supervisor of welfare work, became too extravagant in her program for the management. The supervisor at the time said that she "thought the mill was run chiefly to provide her with people to entertain." The welfare worker planned outings that took the girls out of the mill during working hours, which caused considerable problems for the foremen. She also failed to oversee her assistants who did not maintain the program's facilities as expected. The assistants and eventually the supervisor of welfare work eventually lost their jobs, and the program closed.⁹³ Despite the few welfare workers who went too far with their work, welfare programs afforded the mill owner with the means to provide humanitarian assistance to his employees and at the same time to keep a close eye on them.

⁹²Brandes, American Welfare Capitalism, 112-118; and Robert Sidney Smith, Mill on the Dan: A History of Dan River Mills, 1882-1950 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1960), 260-262. Miss Hylton also advised the mill owner to be more prompt in seeing to house maintenance and village improvements.

⁹³Herring, Welfare Work, 301-302.

Although mill owners held similar practical views about welfare work, mill workers had differing and mixed reactions to welfare programs. Some workers were indifferent to the programs, participating in a very limited way or not at all. Jennings Rhyne, in his 1930 study of North Carolina life, found that disinterest to welfare programs was the general response among mill workers. The operative, according to Rhyne, viewed welfare "activities as irrelevant to the real problem of living. If these facilities are placed at his disposal, he accepts them as a matter of course; if lacking, he does not miss them." Rhyne further cites the movement from mill to mill, regardless of the existence or extent of welfare programs, as an expression of operatives' indifference to welfarism. It did not seem to matter if a mill had a program or what type of activities the program sponsored when choosing a mill community.⁹⁴

Lois McDonald, a contemporary of Rhyne, also found that most operatives were not interested in the welfare programs. Although she had a hard time getting people to talk openly about the mill and its welfare programs, McDonald found that most operatives indicated lack of time and energy as a reason for not taking advantage of welfare programs. For example, when she asked about recreation programs, one operative responded: "'Not many goes after welfare work and such things.'" She believed that indifference like this was

⁹⁴Rhyne, Some Southern Cotton Mill Workers, 35; Lahne, The Cotton Mill Worker, 66; and Herring, Welfare Work, 132-134, 304-306.

prevalent because "almost none of the offices and positions of responsibility in the villages are held by the ordinary worker," which made many welfare programs unresponsive to the operatives' needs and desires. Perhaps in response to such views, Dunean Mill organized neighborhood welfare committees and engaged an operative to be "hostess" at the Community House.⁹⁵ In this way, the mill workers became more directly involved in the operation of the welfare program.

The long work day also accounted for the seeming indifference among mill workers to welfarism. Few workers, especially working women, welcomed working sixteen hours, keeping house, cooking healthy meals, and participating in outside activities in one day. A female operative in the Winnsboro Mill north of Columbia talked about attendance at the Mothers' Club: "Seems like all women not working at night would go to the Mother's Club. But they didn't care so much about going, and those that work at night have to give up such as that." This woman, who worked in the cardroom, enjoyed the Mothers' Club herself and saw great benefit in it for the community. She viewed the club as

. . . such a help to the people. They have good times when they meet and sew. When a body that is down and out has a baby, they will send them clothes. I have known them to give a whole outfit for a baby, when a family was in bad.

⁹⁵McDonald, Southern Mill Hills, 75-77, 150; Parker Progress, 7 January 1927; and ibid., 9 September 1927.

A male co-worker agreed with her assessment of the club and also stressed the charity work of the women in the community. He described them as "great aids to young wives . . . [and] a source of much inspiration."⁹⁶ Regardless of such benefits to workers and community, many workers remained impassive about mill welfare programs.

Although many mill workers were indifferent to welfarism, others saw such programs in a very negative light. Not only was welfare not meeting their needs, it was taking money out of their pockets. Operatives felt "that the money spent on these programs is rightfully due them anyway and they earn it as truly as they do their cash wages." These workers perceived no need for welfare programs and believed that the money being wasted on welfarism could be used to buy food and clothes for their families.⁹⁷

Whether from stubbornness or from contempt for a welfare program, some mill workers responded to welfarism by asserting their accustomed manners. Instead of instilling urban middle class habits on some operatives, welfarism only served to strengthen their ties to the old ways. Jacquelyn

⁹⁶Jeannette Paddock Nichols, "Does the Mill Village Foster Any Social Types?", The Journal of Social Forces, Vol. II, no. 3, March 1924, 353; Carrie Johnson, Winnsboro Mills, 9 March 1939, Works Project Administration, Federal Writers' Project, South Carolina Life Histories A-3-10, South Caroliniana Library (SCL), University of South Carolina, Columbia; and Claude A. Simms, Winnsboro Mills, 2 September 1939, South Carolina Life Histories A-3-19, SCL.

⁹⁷Lahne, The Cotton Mill Worker, 66; Newby, Plain Folk, 284; and Herring, Welfare Work, 305.

Hall and Allen Tullos, in their studies of mill workers, found that many families coped with learning to live in mill villages by maintaining familiar ways. The League family at Poe Mill, for example, kept a large garden and raised and butchered hogs. They also used home remedies and herbal medicines; Grandmother League "would gather herbs from the woods and cook them and make medicines." She also passed on the tradition to her grandchildren.⁹⁸ Despite the push from the welfare worker to change their ways, some mill families continued their traditional ways.

This indifference to and scorn of welfare activities by operatives often proved frustrating to the welfare worker. Some welfare workers were "particularly discouraged over their efforts to raise the standard of homekeeping." Improving the operatives' home life was one of the main goals of the welfare worker. Part of the difficulty was finding a time when the woman could talk and visit with the welfare worker. If a woman was not working a twelve-hour shift in the mill, then she was usually busy with housework and child care. One missionary finally realized a solution: she helped a woman with her laundry in order to be with the woman long enough to talk and to pray.⁹⁹ Yet many welfare workers found more than just schedule conflicts to overcome.

⁹⁸Hall et al., Like A Family, 13; Tullos, Habits of Industry, 8-12, 176-177; and Newby, Plain Folk, 285.

⁹⁹Nichols, "Does the Mill Village Foster Any Social Types?," 353; Newby, Plain Folk, 282; and Mrs. J. T. Gantt, "Mission Work Among the People," n.p., n.d., 2.

Mill villages could be rough places, especially for women who grew up in more established urban areas. Ila Bollick at Langley Manufacturing Company expressed concern that "existing conditions found in places like this" were incomprehensible to outsiders. One Baptist missionary, in describing her mill village, noted that "the snuff or tobacco habit was alarming, while free whiskey seemed to be the rule." Edith Leighty, at the Columbia Wesley House, echoed this sentiment:

Eighty-five percent of the bootlegging of the city is carried on in our section. During the last two months of the year conditions in this respect have become worse. There is scarcely a home where there is not drinking on Saturday and Sunday. We know of at least a dozen people, almost at our door, who engage in this traffic; but the sentiment of the community is such that there is practically no co-operation against it . . . We believe that this community, so deeply dyed in sin, will yet praise His name, which is now seldom used except in oaths and curses.

Leighty's co-worker, Constance Palmore, also recognized an element of "wickedness" in the community and was anxious to combat it. Yet Deaconess Eugenia Smith reminded the Methodist Church and fellow workers that "we make the mistake of classing all together, but there are just as many different classes there as any place."¹⁰⁰ She urged them to focus not on the "wickedness" but on what good could come of it all. Welfare workers acknowledged the challenge of the mill village and of gaining the trust of the people, and

¹⁰⁰The Advocate, 26 August 1909, 7; ibid., 25 July 1907, 6-7; The State, 19 May 1903, 1; Herbert, Fifty Wonderful Years, 75-76; and Reports of the Woman's Missionary Council, 1929, 219.

they worked through often difficult situations to bring about change.

Some welfare workers found the beginning difficult and progress slow, while others moved easily into their role in the village. Miss Bollick's initial work at Langley was met with prejudice and wariness. The mill workers did not want charity and were suspicious of why she was there. After two years, Miss Bollick reported that the situation had improved and that the superintendent finally was beginning to work with her in a few areas. Dora Hoover, on the other hand, "found a cordial welcome awaiting me, which has since grown into a warm friendship" when she arrived at the Orangeburg Wesley House. Deaconess Hoover characterized the people as "liberal and responsive" and in general appreciative of her work. Nettie Stroup found satisfaction in her ability "to inject into the lives and homes of those underprivileged people many things that go into making of new lives and new homes" in the Spartan Mills. And there was Bettie Richards at Watts Mills, who was so admired that at least 35 children bore her name.¹⁰¹ Welfare workers encountered a variety of environments, some good and some difficult, yet they persisted in their endeavors to assist the mill people.

¹⁰¹The Advocate, 15 June 1911, 7; ibid., 10 May 1928, 12; Woman's Missionary Society, Report of the Woman's Missionary Society of the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (n.p.n, 19-21 March 1919), 34-35; and "Miss Richards Honored for 42 Years Service," Bettie Richards Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

Those groups of people touched by welfare programs in textile mills had differing reactions, both as a group and within the group. While mill owners generally saw welfarism as an investment in the workforce and a means of worker control, there was no one response by mill workers because, as with any large and diverse group, there were various opinions. Although some operatives took advantage of welfare programs, others did not out of general indifference, scorn for management wasting money on unnecessary operations, or a personal need to retain traditional ways. The welfare worker, faced with the harsh reality of mill life, was there with a goal, and she persevered as long as she could. Some welfare workers fared better in their situations, whereas others encountered greater challenges. Their response, no matter what the situation, was to be there for the mill people. Everyone had their own views about welfarism, regardless of the role they played in welfare programs.

Chapter 5

The Beginning of the End

The use of welfare workers and welfare programs by southern textile mills began to change in the 1920s and 1930s. As many Americans saw their world transformed during this period, so too the mill welfare worker saw her role greatly changing and eventually disappearing. Still feeling the effects of the textile depression of the early 1920s, the Great Depression caused most mills to cut back even more on expenses in many areas, and welfare programs were an easy target. Also, New Deal labor legislation moved the responsibility of providing worker welfare from the mill to the federal government. These reasons and a general shift in worker attitude toward mill welfarism led to a gradual phasing out of welfare workers. Welfare programs remained but in greatly modified form and usually managed through the personnel department. Thus, women welfare workers were no longer necessary to sustain the emerging worker welfare system of the 1930s.

Although significant changes in welfare programs occurred in the 1930s, the signs of change appeared in the 1920s. The textile depression of the early 1920s caused many mills to scale back their welfare programs. If a welfare worker resigned during this time, the mill probably

did not replace her in order to save that expense. Some welfare workers shifted to part-time status or worked at several mills, which greatly restricted her role in any one village. Also, the emphasis of welfare programs began a gradual shift during this time as well. Mills moved away from domestic science classes, clubs, and health work and by the late 1920s focused on pension plans, health plans, group life insurance, and stock options. This change of emphasis was due in part to increased workers' indifference to social uplift and to intense interest in economic security.¹⁰² Even with the economic improvements of the mid-1920s, welfare programs did not grow or resume their former role.

Although workers' apathy to known welfare work continued, they were receptive to the new aspects such as pension plans. An operative at a North Carolina mill told a Federal Writers' Project member that when she learned the mill was going to let her go, he immediately "went up to the welfare and put in for a old age pension." He was more interested in long-term care than joining a club or participating in other welfare program activities, even though he now had the time.¹⁰³

¹⁰²Herring, Welfare Work, 121-129; Brandes, American Welfare Capitalism, 141; Tullos, Habits of Industry, 299-302; and Lahne, The Cotton Mill Worker, 52.

¹⁰³Interview with George Dobbin and family, Rimmerton Mill, by Ida Moore in These Are Our Lives: As told by the people and written by members of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration in North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1975), 198.

Many workers resented the old style of welfare which focused on the worker's inability to care for himself. Second and third generation mill workers did not face the transition from farm to factory. Also, the general improvement in American lifestyle and the availability of the automobile to workers cut the string which tied them to the company store, doctor, and church. As Marjorie Potwin indicates, "the mill village has shared in the general twentieth-century change. We have the auto and the movies and the radio, the lipstick and the boyish bob." This sentiment is reflected repeatedly in the Parker Progress which was a weekly newspaper for the mill villages of the Parker District in Greenville. Begun in 1925, the paper carried photographs of people in the villages dressed in the latest fashions. It also carried advertisements for automobiles and home conveniences.¹⁰⁴ Thus the workers' dependence on the mill began to lessen in the 1920s, gradually making welfare workers and welfare programs which focused on physical uplift less effective.

Along with a shift in mill worker attitude, welfare workers experienced a change in their profession in the mid-1920s. Harriet Herring noted that workers used to ask what they could do for the needy. In 1926, however, the question became: "How can we so train our people that they will not only be able, but will want, to do things for themselves?"

¹⁰⁴Potwin, Cotton Mill People, 34; Andrews, The Men and the Mill, 197; Parker Progress, 1925-1927 passim; and Carlton, Mill and Town, 269-271.

This shift in philosophy appeared in some mills where the welfare work became more community centered; it was the mill people and not a trained welfare worker who carried on the activities. At Dunearn Mill early in 1927, for instance, Miss Bessie Allen was engaged as "hostess" to oversee the community house, along with her other duties in the cloth room in the mill. Miss Allen was active also in the community as president of the Dunearn Girls' Club and as a religious worker. In September of that same year, the mill owner started a new system of community work. The village was divided into sections with one female resident appointed as representative for each section. Her duties included greeting newcomers, monitoring the ill and needy families, and aiding in the development of community life, duties formerly held by the welfare worker.¹⁰⁵ As mill workers began to take a more active and prominent role in their own welfare, the need for welfare workers greatly decreased.

The late 1920s was also the time when the social welfare philosophy changed again. According to welfare historians June Axinn and Herman Levin, the prosperity experienced after World War I caused a subsiding in the war against poverty and social ills, and even the depression in 1921 did not see the re-emergence of concern for the poor. Social reformers ceased their cries for change out of fear of being labeled subversive, an after effect of the war.

¹⁰⁵Herring, Welfare Work, 304; Parker Progress, 7 January; and *ibid.*, 9 September 1927.

Axinn and Levin also contend that the professionalization of welfare work occurs at this time. The importance of supervision and casework superseded daily personal contact as the welfare worker's responsibilities, and her time was spent in the office, not in the village. If the welfare worker survived the philosophical shift, she left her position in the community house and moved into the mill office, often into the personnel department.¹⁰⁶ There she supervised the much reduced community organized activities.

Despite changes in operatives' attitudes, social welfare policy, and professionalism of welfare work, the Great Depression of the 1930s essentially ended the welfarism of the early 1900s. Not only did the economic situation require that mills cut as many expenses as possible in order to survive, but the expanded role of the federal government in its New Deal policies also proved detrimental to existing welfare work. Through legislation such as the National Industrial Recovery Act, the National Labor Relations Act, Social Security, and the Fair Labor Standards Act, the federal government greatly reduced the control that textile mills held over their employees. Mills were forced to pay a competitive wage for the first time and to allow company unions to operate in private companies if desired by the workers. The National Labor Relations Board, created under the NLRA, reviewed several cases of employee

¹⁰⁶Axinn and Levin, Social Welfare, pp. 152-154, 156; and from a talk given by Ms. Andrea Kluge on welfare capitalism at University of South Carolina, 3 February 1992.

representation and "issued cease-and-desist orders to prevent companies from operating social and recreational clubs" when they were used to air grievances between employees and mill management. Therefore, many clubs operated under the welfare program were closed by the mills to prevent suspicion of wrong doing.¹⁰⁷ Thus the welfare program became an undue expense and a liability to the mill in the 1930s.

The textile mill welfare work of the early twentieth century no longer existed by the late 1930s. Even the mill village began to change. Mills started to sell off housing to mill workers, and the family labor system ceased to exist as before.¹⁰⁸ There was no room for the welfare worker and her programs in this new village. Her initial role as assisting in the transition from farm to factory was no longer valid because most people living in mill villages by the 1930s were second and third generation mill workers. This is not to say that these new mill workers had completely accepted urban middle class values, yet the desire to transform them was minimal at this time. While there was still a need for social work, welfarism had been transferred to the personnel department. Mill workers desired greater control over their lives and this included

¹⁰⁷Brandes, American Welfare Capitalism, 142-145; and Pope, Millhands and Preachers, 41-42, 191. There is no evidence that welfare work was a front for unauthorized company unions.

¹⁰⁸Wright, Old South, New South, 154.

the types of activities which went on in the mill village. Having gradually faded from prominence during the 1920s, the welfare worker virtually disappeared in the 1930s, leaving little trace of her existence.

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